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RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0730  
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000529

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA  
BAGHDAD FOR DMCCULLOUGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: 19 OF NIGERIA'S OPPOSITION PARTIES TRYING TO UNITE

REF: A. ABUJA 514

[1](#)B. ABUJA 482

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) On March 24, nineteen Nigerian opposition parties agreed to form what they described as a mega-party to challenge the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2011 elections. While most were very small, the largest (Buhari) faction of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and the leadership of the Action Congress (AC) were represented in the meeting. The opposition parties accused the PDP of running the country into the ground and acting as if Nigeria were a one-party state. According to Buba Galadima, who represented General Muhammadu Buhari (the ANPP nominee and second-place finisher in the 2007 Presidential election) in the meeting, the coalition has selected a steering committee and will meet again on April 7 under the leadership of Chief Anthony Enahoro (one of Nigeria's foremost anti-colonial and pro-democracy activists) and former Lagos State Governor Lateef Kayode Jakande. The focus of the next meeting will be to determine the new party's name and logo so that it can be registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In a March 25 conversation with PolOff, Galadima said that, while INEC may try to delay registration by claiming that the new party's name or logo are too similar to those of another party (something INEC has done several times in the past), he was confident the new group could avoid this with a little care at the April 7 meeting.

[1](#)2. (C) When asked how the coalition would select a presidential candidate for the 2011 polls, given that both Buhari and the other leading opposition candidate in the 2007 election, the AC's Atiku Abubakar, appear to be represented in this new party, Galadima said that the coalition is not looking exclusively at these two as possible candidates. He added that at least Buhari is looking at the broader goal of challenging the PDP (though he did not deny that Buhari remains interested in the presidency). Galadima said the new coalition is open to members or factions from any of the existing political parties; he acknowledged that the coalition has not been approached by any PDP factions, but noted that such groupings are becoming increasingly visible (see Lagos septel), which he claimed was evidence of worries within the ruling party about losing control.

¶3. (C) In a March 25 conversation with Political Assistant, "Leadership" newspaper Editor Sam Isaiah referred to reports that the PDP was considering giving its sitting members of the National Assembly automatic renomination "tickets" (see ref A), and said this shows that the ruling party is itself getting started on pre-election maneuvering, and has no intention of giving up power. In addition, he opined that the biggest threat the PDP faces may come from some of its own internal factions who are unhappy with the lack of progress the President has made on his seven point policy agenda. Isaiah specifically mentioned the Restoration Group which includes the former Speaker of the House Aminu Bello Masari and several who served as Ministers in former President Obasanjo's administration, Adamu Waziri, Lawal Batagurwa, Nmadi Usman, and Solomon Ewuga.

¶4. (C) Comment: As noted in ref B, the opposition parties' activities are further evidence that maneuvering for the 2011 elections is beginning. We remain skeptical, however, about this opposition effort to form an umbrella party, noting how previous such efforts have been derailed by their inability to agree on one presidential candidate. Nigerian political parties are largely organized around support for one central Big Man, rather than an ideology. We recall that, prior to the 2007 elections, a similar coalition of opposition parties, again including Buhari and Atiku, came together and committed to running a single candidate to challenge the PDP for the Presidency. When neither of these two leaders was prepared to step aside for the other, however, the effort collapsed. There are, of course, also rumors that Atiku is, himself, seriously considering returning to the PDP. The

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games are just beginning. End Comment.

¶5. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.  
SANDERS